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ENG 2850-001: Postcolonial Literatures in English

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English 2850-001: "Postcolonial Literatures in English"
"Revoicing the Story"

Spring 2006

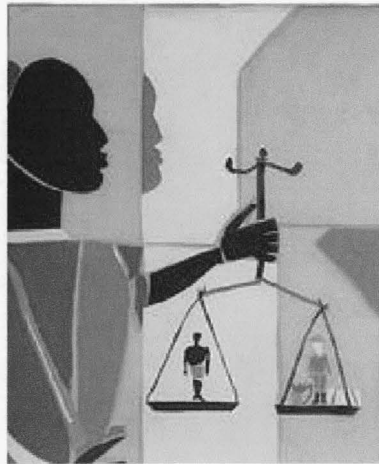
Class Meeting: Tuesday Evenings, 6.30-9pm

Dr. Dagni Bredesen

Office Hours: Monday/Wednesdays 1.00-2.00pm or by appointment

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Course Description: In this course, we will look at two sets of texts: one set by the colonizer (now firmly established within the canon of "English Literature"), the other a set of answers to those texts, a revising or 'revoicing' of them from a perspective suppressed in them. This answering is what constitutes the postcolonial, a telling of the story from the voices that form the silent bedrock of the colonial texts. So, for example, the voice of Bertha Mason in *Jane Eyre* is articulated in more than an animalistic howl in Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea* and the story she tells is different. Pitting these texts against each other, we get a holistic sense of the colonial experience—the conflict and the complicity, the violence and the exchanges it involves—and it is this particular conjunction that will produce what we will come to understand as the postcolonial.

Required Texts include:

Unit One: Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* / J.M.Coetzee's *Foe*

Unit Two: Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*/ Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea*

Unit Three: Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*/ Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*

As well as other textual and background readings.

Please note: You will also need a College Level Dictionary to succeed in this course.

Course Assignments: To achieve the objectives described above students will need to keep up with the rigorous reading schedule and actively participate in the class discussion. The following assignments will foster the active engagement necessary to make this a productive and exciting learning experience.

I. Papers: Three “close-reading” essays (4 pages, 150 points each = 450 points)
One longer (5-7 pages) “argument” essay based on a topic you develop from your reading over this semester (300 points)

III. Extending Your World: The word “university” carries with it the idea that part of your education includes an exploration of the universe, that is, the world around you. This course offers you the opportunity to gain credit for participating in activities in ways that stretch you intellectually, politically, personally. For this assignment you are encouraged to go to an event or performance, a lecture, a concert that in some way that extends you beyond what you have previously experienced. Thus for example, most of you have been to movies or concerts but maybe you have never watched an “art film” or listened to live classical music or attended a ballet. **“Extending your world” means doing something that takes you beyond the range of what you would ordinarily do. Each one of your personal field trips needs to be different.** Here are some ideas 1) go to an art museum and look at an exhibit then focus on one particular painting for 15 minutes and do some research on the artist for the write-up. 2) go to an ethnic restaurant that serves food other than Mexican, Chinese, Italian, or any other food you are familiar with. Pay attention to the ambience, décor, what you order, how it tastes, etc. 3) do something different; for example give blood, volunteer in the community **NOT** because your fraternity or sorority has mandated that you do it but for its own sake. 4) attend a lecture/presentation in a field that is different from the one you are studying in. 5) other—clear with me.

The experience itself is part one of this assignment. Part two is writing it up in a thoughtful, well-crafted way that clearly describes the experience itself and explains in what ways this experience has taken you beyond your usual realm of experience, and finally reflects on this experience in relation to something we have discussed in class. This paper should be type written, carefully proofread and its length should 1 full page single-spaced or more. You will write three of these papers. (50 points each = 150 points).

IV. Participation: Please note that this class is DISCUSSION-DRIVEN. This means that there is an expectation that each student will be fully prepared for each meeting having read and thought about the text assigned for the day and able to initiate or contribute to discussion with relevant and meaningful questions or comments that indicate a serious effort to grapple with the readings and the questions that frame this course. (100 points).

Attendance Policy: You may miss 1 class no questions asked, no excuses needed. After that missed class your grade will drop one level. For example, if you were earning a B and you miss a second class, your grade will drop to C; if you miss a third class, your grade will drop to a D. If you miss 4 or more classes you will receive a failing grade for this class. This means you will probably not want to squander your allowable absence but save it for when you need it.

Course Schedule:

Please note this schedule is provisional and subject to change. Also, students should read assigned text(s) prior to the class in which the text(s) will be discussed.

Week One (1/10)

Introduction to Class:
Oppositional Analysis
Binarism
"White Man's Burden"
Introduce *Robinson Crusoe*
HMWK: *Robinson Crusoe* read up to and including p119

Week Two (1/17)

HMWK: *Robinson Crusoe* to p220 and 227-245

Week Three (1/24) DUE: EXTENDING YOUR MAP #1

Discuss assigned reading
HMWK: *Foe* Part 1

Week Four (1/31) Discuss assigned reading

HMWK: *Foe* Part II and III

Week Five (2/07) Discuss assigned reading

Paper workshop
HMWK: Read *Jane Eyre* Preface, chapters 1-10

Week Six (2/14) First Essay Due.

Discuss assigned readings
HMWK: *Jane Eyre*, chapters 11-27

Week Seven (2/21) Discuss assigned readings

HMWK: *Jane Eyre*, chapters 28-38

Week Eight (2/28) DUE: EXTENDING YOUR MAP #2

Discuss assigned readings
HMWK: *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Part One

Week Nine (3/07) Discuss assigned readings

HMWK: *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Part Two and Ending

SPRING BREAK: PLEASE READ *Heart of Darkness***Week Ten (3/21)**

Discuss assigned readings
HMWK: Paper #2 Due /Also read *Heart of Darkness*

Week Eleven (3/28)

Discuss assigned reading.
HMWK: *Things Fall Apart*

Week Twelve (4/04) DUE: EXTENDING YOUR MAP #3

Discuss assigned reading

HMWK: Paper #3 and start reading *Purple Hibiscus*

Week Thirteen (4/11)

Discuss assigned reading

HMWK: Finish *Purple Hibiscus*

Week Fourteen (4/18) Discuss assigned readings

HMWK: Final Paper

Week Fifteen (4/25)

Paper Presentation

Class Wrap Up

Final Paper Due: Tuesday, May 2nd, 5pm